

WHILE most of the Wycombe Wanderers fans at Stompond Lane, Walton and Hershaw tomorrow (Saturday) will be thinking of F.A. Cup glory, one man's thoughts will be concentrating on another aspect of the game — finance.

The man in question is Wanderers treasurer Roger Lee, who along with many others in football generally, is becoming increasingly worried by the drop in attendances.

Roger took football league division 2 Sunderland as an example of the present plight. At Sunderland the average gate used to be around 40,000. By May this year the club had debts of £250,000 and with attendances down to 14,000 it was losing £2,000 a week. To break even they need crowds of over 25,000.

Drop in attendances worries Wanderers

Although one of the extreme cases, the theme has been the same for most clubs over the past few years. So what has been and what will the effect be on Wycombe Wanderers?

The club have been somewhat unfortunate in the F.A. Cup this year, being drawn away from home in all three qualifying games. Had the matches been staged at Wycombe, there is no doubt the gates at Tooting and Egham would have been doubled.

Several reasons have been given for the drop in football interest. Over-exposure, too costly and crowd violence to name but three.

Wycombe increased their gate prices at the start of the season from 20p to 25p. The extra five pence could have affected some people's decision and kept away the occasional supporter. The weather too has some relevance on the situation.

And one must take into account that Wanderers,

although getting favourable results, have yet to consistently produce their own brand of attacking football this season. Hendon and Oxford being exceptions. But as Roger points out, the club are league champions, Berks and Bucks finalists and Amateur Cup semi-finalists.

The standard of facilities can also affect the supporter. Wanderers' committee are constantly looking to improve facilities at the club. A new £800 loud-speaker system has recently been

installed and Roger feels Wycombe can now boast some of the best facilities in the league.

Talking in terms of figures the drop is obvious. Bearing in mind that the 1970-71 season was an exception to the rule (two local F.A. Cup derbys against Slough Town attracting 12,000 spectators), Wanderers only dropped below the 2,000 mark at all their Isthmian League matches three times.

This term they have only topped 2,000 in three of their eight home games.

Their 2-0 defeat in the F.A. Cup at Maidenhead last year cost them £5,000 compared with the year before when they reached the first round proper. This did much to bring about an overall loss of £2,822 over the year.

Looking on the black side of things, Wanderers could be in trouble if they go out of the Cup at Walton tomorrow and were K.O'd early in the Amateur Cup. Roger Lee admits the overall loss could be well in excess of last years figure.

But Roger is quick to point out that the drop in attendances all started last year after the successful 70-71 season. Gates last season were down by an overall 25,000.